

DEEP Insights Into the First College Year: Creating Pathways for Student Success - 2005

DEEP Insights Into the First College Year: Creating Pathways for Student Success

First-Year Experience
Conference
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We all want the same thing—
an undergraduate experience
that results in high levels of
learning and personal
development for all students.



Advance Organizers

1. How do we get more students to take greater advantage of our resources for learning?
2. What are 2-3 key challenges facing my campus in terms of
 - enhancing student engagement and learning?
 - improving educational effectiveness?
 - promoting student success?

Overview

- Introduction to student engagement and DEEP
- Findings from Project DEEP
- Promising Practices for the First Year
- Discussion and Comments

What accounts for these results?

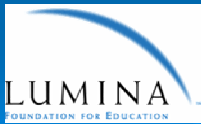
- 87% first-years "often" or "very often" ask questions or contribute to class discussions [Wabash College]
- 38% first-years worked with faculty on a research project outside of class [Michigan]
- 79% first-years participated in community service experiences [CSUMB]
- First-years significantly more likely to use an electronic medium to discuss or complete an assignment than peers [George Mason]
- 78% first-years agreed "quite a bit" or "very much" emphasis on academic support [WSSU]
- First-year retention rate = 90% [Miami]

Project DEEP



To discover,
document and
describe what
high performing
institutions do
and how they
achieved this
level of
effectiveness

Project DEEP Partners



DEEP Research Questions:

- What do high-performing colleges and universities do to promote student success?
- What campus features -- policies, programs, and practices -- contribute to high levels of engagement and better than predicted graduation rates?



DEEP Selection Criteria

Controlling for student and institutional characteristics (i.e., selectivity, diversity, institutional type), DEEP schools have:

- Higher-than-predicted graduation rates
- Higher-than-predicted levels of student engagement

Region and institutional type, special mission



National Survey of Student Engagement
(pronounced "nessie")



Community College Survey of Student Engagement
(pronounced "sessie")

College student surveys that assess the extent to which students engage in educational practices associated with high levels of learning and development

Two Components of Student Engagement

- What students do -- time and energy devoted to educationally purposeful activities
- What institutions do -- using effective educational practices to induce students to do the right things

Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education

(Chickering & Gamson, 1987)

- Student-faculty contact
- Active learning
- Prompt feedback
- Time on task
- High expectations
- Respect for diverse learning styles
- Cooperation among students





DEEP Research Approach

- **Case study method**
 - Team of 24 researchers
 - Two visits to 20 institutions; multiple-day site visits
 - Review institutional documents
 - Observations of campus culture, individual and group meetings
 - Identification of effective practice and programs
- **Roundtables conducted by AAHE to explore uses of NSSE data for improvement of student learning**

DEEP Institutions*

Doctoral Extensives	Liberal Arts
University of Kansas	California State, Monterey Bay
University of Michigan	Macalester College
	Sweet Briar College
Doctoral Intensives	The Evergreen State College
George Mason University	Sewanee: University of the South
Miami University (Ohio)	Ursinus College
University of Texas at El Paso	Wabash College
	Wheaton College (MA)
Master's Granting	Wofford College
Fayetteville State University	
Gonzaga University	Baccalaureate General
Longwood University	Alverno College
	University of Maine at Farmington
	Winston-Salem State University

* Higher-than-predicted graduation rates and levels of student engagement

Findings from Project DEEP

- Many roads to becoming an educationally engaging institution
- No blueprint for success
- Institutions created own way, experimenting with home-grown ideas and adapting promising practices discovered at other institutions
- Complementary, interactive and synergistic conditions promote student learning
- Sustained at many levels, no "unsupported mandates"

Six Shared Conditions

1. "Living" Mission and "Lived" Educational Philosophy
2. Unshakeable Focus on Student Learning
3. Environments Adapted for Educational Advantage
4. **Clearly Marked Pathways to Student Success**
5. Improvement-Oriented Ethos
6. Shared Responsibility for Educational Quality

Lessons

4. **Clearly Marked Pathways to Student Success**
 - ❖ Make plain to students the resources and services available to help them succeed.
 - ❖ Some guideposts tied directly to the academic program; others related to student and campus culture.
 - ❖ Institutional publications accurately describe what students experience.

Lessons

4. *Clearly Marked Pathways to Student Success*

- ❖ Efforts tailored to student needs.
- ❖ Mutually reinforcing student expectations and behavior, institutional expectations, and institutional reward systems.
- ❖ Redundant early warning systems and safety nets

To Ponder:

- How do your first year students learn what it takes to succeed?
- What rituals or traditions signal student success?
- What are your signature programs for assuring student success?
- What warning systems or safety nets are in place for intervention?

Anticipatory socialization to involvement opportunities

At Wheaton, admissions staff add personal, hand-written messages to students' letters of admission, encouraging them to continue their high school involvement in college, and providing suggestions about how to do so. In addition, postcards sent to admitted students invite them to volunteer as "Freshman Ambassadors."

Anticipatory socialization to involvement opportunities

At Longwood, the "New Student Leadership Program" brings 80 first-year students to campus prior to the beginning of the fall semester to explore leadership skills, build support networks for leadership development, and provide opportunities for faculty and staff to identify potential student leaders.

Socialization to Academic Expectations

Wheaton new students read a common book and essays by faculty that respond to the reading. Assigned readings, faculty responses, and the website combine to introduce incoming students to preferred ways to grapple with intellectual issues.

Socialization to Academic Expectations

Wofford first-year students read a common novel and write a short essay connecting it to their own lives. The eight best essays are published and distributed to all new students, creating the first class celebrities.

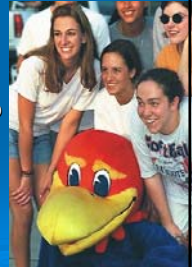
Intentional acculturation

Miami (Ohio) created the First Year Experience (FYE) Committee to explore ways to enhance the holistic FYE. Means to achieve their goals include (1) Miami Plan Foundation courses taught by full-time faculty; (2) optional first-year seminars; (3) community living options that emphasize leadership and service; and (4) cultural, intellectual, and arts events.

Intentional acculturation

Rituals and traditions connect students to each other and the institution

KU's "Traditions Night." 3,000 + students gather in the football stadium to rehearse the Rock Chalk Chant, listen to stories about the Jayhawk, learn the "I'm a Jayhawk" school song, and hear stories intended to instill students' commitment to graduation

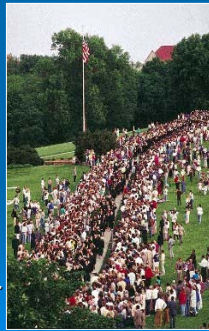


Intentional acculturation

Generations of Jayhawks are introduced.



As the sun sets, the University Torch, symbolizing knowledge, is relayed down the Hill by members of the senior through first-year class.



Co-curriculum reinforces academic engagement

Undergraduate residence hall assistants at Longwood University are selected in part based on their understanding of the University's educational mission & are trained to help advise students. Student affairs staff are key contributors to summer orientation and to the first-year Longwood seminar.

Connect Students to Campus in Meaningful Ways

University of Maine at Farmington's Student Work Initiative employs students* in meaningful work in student services, laboratories, and field-research. Such experiences provide students opportunities to apply what they are learning to practical, real-life situations.

** 50% of UMF's students work on campus*

Connect Students in Meaningful Ways

California State University, Monterey Bay (CSUMB) requires all students to complete both a lower and upper-level service learning experience as a means to apply knowledge, connect with the local community, and make connections with ideals and meaning larger than themselves.

Connect Students in Meaningful Ways

Connections to the community...

Macalester College's "Into the Streets" event is part of the required first-year seminar, taking students into local neighborhoods to do community service. Half of all students participate in internships; 90% do a senior capstone project.

Infuse Diversity Experiences

UTEP intentionally socializes newcomers to the value of diversity through its University 1301: Seminar in Critical Inquiry (UNIV 1301), a core curriculum seminar course. The diverse array of course choices has the potential to expose first-year students to both familiar and unfamiliar topics.

Mentoring

At WSSU, sections of first year seminars are designated for students interested in specific majors. Specially selected faculty members from these departments teach the course and also serve as students' academic advisors and "faculty mentor" for the academic year. Discipline-specific orientations immediately immerse students in the academic culture and facilitate early bonds with faculty.

Mentoring

Michigan's University Mentorship Program matches up groups of four first-year students with an older student and a faculty or staff member who all share the same academic interests. The goal is to provide students with mentoring relationships, networking opportunities, yearlong guidance and support, and in general to help ease the transition to college.

Focus Attention on Student Success

Community celebrations of scholarship

UMF hosts "Spring Symposium" a day when no classes are held and all students, faculty, and administrators are given the opportunity to present research, artistic, intellectual, & other creative projects, and learn from others.

Michigan and Wabash conduct spring research presentations where first-year share their work with the campus.

Redundant early warning systems

FSU's Early Alert program enables faculty to contact first-year student mentors and University College to alert them about students experiencing difficulty during the first two weeks of the semester. Mentors contact students to advise and refer as appropriate.

Redundant early warning systems: "Tag Teaming"

- Wheaton first-year student advising team includes faculty, student preceptors, librarians and administrative staff.
- At Ursinus, Miami, and Wheaton representatives from both academic affairs and student affairs serve as academic advisors.

Project DEEP and the First Year of College

- Intentional socialization to academic values of institution
- High expectations balanced by support
- Shared responsibility for educational quality
- Focus on transitions
- Purposeful infusion of diversity
- Focus on improvement-oriented assessment

Using NSSE Data to Improve the First Year Experience

Intentional improvement at DEEP schools:

- ❑ Sewanee created an innovative new First Year Program with an emphasis on active and collaborative learning to improve its scores on that benchmark.
- ❑ University of Texas at El Paso uses learning communities, course-based service learning, and volunteerism to actively engage its mostly commuter, first-generation students.

To Improve Practice:

Many institutions have programs geared for student success including first-year seminars, learning communities etc. As we describe the initiatives at DEEP schools, think about programs at your school:

- How well do our programs work?
- How many students does our program reach in meaningful ways and how do we know?
- To what degree are our programs and practices complementary and synergistic, thereby having an overall greater impact than the sum of each individual initiative?
- What are we doing that is not represented among the policies and practices described later and do we have evidence to justify continuing to do it?
- What are we not doing that perhaps we should?

Levers for Change

- Reframe problems into opportunities
- Make the case for student success
- Commit resources to promising ideas
- Connect complementary efforts
- Put someone in charge
- Data driven reflection and action
- Stay the course

Effective Practice

Collaborations and complementary interventions

- Miami's First Year Experience
- Longwood RAs selected for understanding educational mission
- FSU's Early Alert System
- UTEP's University College and learning communities
- KU's residential learning communities
- GMU - Student Academic Affairs and Advising

Recommendation

Lay out the path to student success

- a. *Draw a map for student success*
- b. *Front load resources to smooth the transition*
- c. *Teach newcomers about the campus culture*

Recommendation cont'd

Lay out the path to student success

- d. *Create a sense of specialness*
- e. *Emphasize student initiative*
- f. *If something works, consider requiring it*
- g. *Focus on underengaged students*

It Takes a Whole Campus to Educate a Student

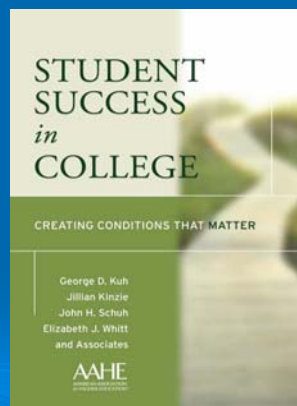


Discussion Questions

- Which of these practices are transferable and adaptable to your institution?
- Which practices are bounded by institutional size or mission?
- What current policies and practices promote high levels of student engagement?
- What are 1-2 steps you can take to cultivate educational practices and campus conditions that promote student success?

Sharing the Findings from Project DEEP

Jossey-Bass
April, 2005



Discussion and Comments

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